various steps to speed up the issuance of passports in the Passport Offices in Andhra Pradesh which include (i) due care is taken at the stage of submission of application forms to avoid objections at a later stage (ii) regular interaction with the police authorities to speed up police verification reports (iii) manning of Facilitation Counter by dedicated staff to attend to the grievances of passport applicants and (iv) opening of District Passport Cells in various districts in the State.

(c) The number of passport applications pending in the two Passport Offices in Andhra Pradesh since 2004 is 4548.

Intelligence Unit to counter terrorism

2534. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Pentagon has created battle-field intelligence units assigned to work with special operations forces on secret counter terrorism missions;

(b) if so, the benefits India is likely to get out of it;

(c) whether India will participate in the formation of the mission; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) U.S. Department of Defence, through a news release on January 23, 2005, denied the existence of any unit directly reportable to the U.S. Secretary of Defence for clandestine operations, as was described in one of the American newspapers, the Washington Post.

(b) to (d) Not applicable.

Agreements with Slovakia

2535. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India has signed three key agreements on wide range interests with Slovakia;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the unified action plan of both countries to control threats of terrorism?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On December 11 2004, India and Slovakia signed the following three key bilateral documents with the Government of Slovakia during the State visit to India of Slovak President, H.E. Dr. Ivan Gasparovic:

(i) Economic Cooperation Agreement;

(ii) Programme of Cooperation in the field of Culture and Arts for the period 2004-2007.

(iii) Memorandum of Understanding between National Small Industries Corporation Ltd. and National Agency for Development of Small & Medium Enterprises.

(c) In a joint Statement issued at the conclusion of the State visit, both sides reiterated their commitment to continue their fight against terrorism. They agreed that combating terrorism has to be a comprehensive and sustained efforts.

Talks among India-America and Iaea

Talks among India-America and IAEA

2536. PROF. R.B.S. VARMA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India-America and International Atomic Energy Agency have held mutual talks, recently;

(b) if so, the agenda of the talks; and

(c) the agreement reached among the three after the talks?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. A joint delegation of representatives from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the US visited New Delhi on 9 February, 2005 for a meeting on the Regional Radiological Security Partnership (RRSP) programme. During the meeting, the three sides acknowledged their shared objective of enhancing globally the security of dangerous radio-active sources. The